

## Polifonia Profession Working Group

**Site visit Report  
2-4 May 2006, Vilnius  
Timo Klemettinen, Rui Fernandes**

*This site visit was carefully prepared by our partner in Vilnius, the adorable and energetic Laima Bakiene. The schedule was tight and thorough, and there was a great will of showing us (almost) everything that is going on in Lithuania about music. We also visited the second biggest city of the country, Kaunas, where the only State Choir is based.*

*We were received by many «music VIP's» who showed to be available and very interested in the Polifonia Project. Most of the things presented to us were very interesting and informative and we learned a lot about the situation of the music profession in Lithuania. The country has a short history as an independent state after having been part of the Soviet Union for nearly 50 years.*

*This report describes what the members of the Polifonia working group on the profession have experienced on their site visit in May 2006 including some remarkable projects that are taking place in Lithuania.*

### Schedule

#### Tuesday May 2

- 12.00 (Timo) Lunch with Ms. Odeta Abromaviciute  
Presentation of Public Institution "Kulturos artele"  
<http://www.cultureartfact.org>  
Presentation of project "Strazdaneles" – early musical education (groups of children from 6 months to 4 years age)  
<http://www.strazdaneles.lt>
- 15.00 (Timo) Meeting with Ms. Teresa Ziboliene and Mr. Arunas Matacius  
Presentation of Production Company "Concept events & media"  
<http://www.concept.lt/>  
Cooperation with Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre with e.Content project HARMOS  
<http://www.harmosproject.com/>
- 19.00 Dinner with Mr. Mindaugas Urbaitis, Ms. Zivile Karkauskaite, Mr. Vaclovas Augustinas  
Presentations:  
Vilnius Municipal Choir "Jauna muzika" (Mr. Vaclovas Augustinas)  
<http://www.jaunamuzika.lt/>  
Lithuanian music performers information centre (Ms. Zivile Karkauskaite)  
<http://www.musicperformers.lt/>  
Discussion with composer Mindaugas Urbaitis  
[http://www.mic.lt/c\\_urbaitis.htm](http://www.mic.lt/c_urbaitis.htm)

Wednesday May 3

- 9:30 Visit to B. Dvarionas Music School  
Ms. Irena Karsokiene, Ms. Vilma Aleksiene, Ms. Vaiva Blaziene  
Music lessons for disabled children, discussion
- 11:00 Presentation of project "Clinica musicalis" audiovisual material  
Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Ms. Inesa Leonaviciute
- 12:00 Visit to Vilnius University Hospital "Santariskiu klinikos", where project  
"Clinica Musicalis" takes place
- 13:00 Meeting with Mr. Aleksandras Laucevicius, General Director of "Santariskiu  
klinikos"
- 16:00 Visit to Kaunas University of Technology (<http://www.muzika.hmf.ktu.lt/>)  
Department of Audiovisual Arts Technologies, Music Technology Study Programme,  
Dr. Darius Kucinskas
- 18:00 Meeting with Mr. Petras Bingelis, Director of Kaunas State Choir, and Mr. Justinas  
Krepsta (Director Of Kaunas Philharmonic)  
<http://www.kaunochoras.lt/>
- 21:00 Presentation of International Festival "Alternatyva", Mr. Martynas Svegza von  
Bekker <http://www.alternatyva.lt/>

Thursday May 4

- 9:45 (Timo) Visit to National M. K. Ciurlionis School of the Arts  
Mr. Romualas Kondrotas, Director (<http://www.ciurlioniomm.lt/>)
- 9:45 (Rui) Meeting with SagaDuo (Ensemble of Percussion and Double Bass)
- 10:30 (Rui) Meeting Ieva Tamutyte  
National Philharmonic Society of Lithuania (Head of Public Relations)  
[www.filharmonija.lt](http://www.filharmonija.lt)
- 11:00 (Rui) Rehearsal of National Symphony Orchestra of Lithuania
- 12:00 Meeting with Mr. Eduardas Gabnys, Rector, Dr. Juozas Antanavicius, Vice-Rector,  
Mr. Povilas Gyls, Vice Rector (Head of the Choir Conducting Department)  
Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre
- 13:30 Visit to Music Information Centre  
Ms. Daiva Parulskiene (<http://www.mic.lt/>)
- 15:30 Brief visits to Embassies of Portugal and Finland respectively

## Country overview

### **From Soviet times to independency**

Lithuanian cultural life and society have gone through significant changes during the past 15 years.

During Soviet times the state and communism ruled cultural life. Today it is a great challenge for cultural institutions and individual artists to find financing for their work. After 1990 when Lithuania became an independent country, the cultural sector tried to establish contacts to the business sector with few results. A quotation from a person we spoke gives a possible explanation for this situation: *"in Lithuania there are two religions; the Catholic church and basketball"*. Big companies are more interested in sponsoring sports. Culture is not seen as an attractive co-operation partner. There is need to create a new way of thinking and to demonstrate the advantages of supporting cultural life from an economic perspective as well.

On the other hand, big cultural institutions still have a strong position in public cultural policy. The management is done in many cases by the very same people that had the "power" already in Soviet times. This fact seems to cause some tension among the younger generation and people wanting to find innovative ways to develop musical life.

In general, the status of music and musicians in society has changed significantly. The country faces many basic problems while trying to become a competitive society on a global market. The focus of the nationwide effort lies in investments in technology and international business. Cultural investment is not regarded as a priority for the moment.

### **Music education**

In Lithuania 110 art schools exist that are funded mostly by municipalities, as well as 3 music conservatories and 5 secondary art schools (Gymnasiums). The music schools are faced with the situation that professional teachers are not inclined to work in small communities. The biggest challenge is the low salary that small cities can pay for music teachers. In Soviet times, teachers who moved to work in the countryside were provided with free housing. Today this is no longer possible. At the moment, Lithuanian music schools try to develop new special pedagogical training systems which would improve professional oriented basic music education.

Regarding the above mentioned difficulties, it is remarkable that projects have emerged offering new pathways for music education in Lithuania.

**B. Dvarionas Music School**, a music school in Vilnius with over 2000 students, has developed a programme for music education and music therapy for disabled students. The programme started in 1997 and at present 30 students are enrolled. The main goals of this project are to develop students' social skills and to integrate disabled/handicapped students in the school community. The results have been so good that some of the special students have been able to join regular music education. There are still many challenges when developing the only music therapy department in the country further, just as need for special instruments, notes and class rooms. Some innovative actions have taken place like the "colour orchestra" (using a special notation system connected to colours) and music education for the deaf. Large co-operations with universities (different departments) played an important role while developing music education for disabled students. Teachers who are working with children are firstly musicians and secondly therapists or psychologists –, but this is still one of the biggest problems: there is no special training for music therapists. For the future it is expected that as soon as a training programme will be established, music therapist may become a new and important professional option, with the emergence of new jobs. The

idea is to integrate arts therapy together with psycho therapy or social therapy in the health system.

At the moment, in school music education there are 2-3 different and competing national curricula. This causes difficulties for music education in schools. The newer curriculum includes more pop and rock music than the earlier folk/classical oriented curriculum. One good thing in school music education is that the amount of music hours taught in schools did not decrease.

As in many other European countries, parents do not sing with their children as much as in the past. Other subjects play a more important role in education than music. Parents believe that by studying mathematics and technology their children will have a better future. The influence of the highly commercial Anglo-American pop and rock culture is very strong among the younger generation.

**The Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre** is the institution offering music performance education on university level in the country. At present, 1150 students are enrolled, 800 of them in music majors. Although there is still enough work available for its graduates, the Academy is aware this may change and is therefore providing its graduates with post-graduate classes in music management, teaching, «applied» musicology (musicology with a practical approach related to the labour market to make it more attractive) and sound design. A music education centre was recently created to offer pedagogical education and experience to graduate students and young professionals. At the moment it is very difficult to obtain governmental funding for music teacher education. The Academy reacts to this situation by squeezing pedagogical course credits in other programmes whenever possible.

Also the Academy faces challenges originating in the Soviet past. Most of the teachers are from 'the old school' and reluctant to any change: it was for example very difficult to establish a jazz programme. The department for choir conducting exists already for a long time and has a decreasing number of students due to the exceeding number of choir conductors on the market. Next year new curricula will be implemented including management skills, marketing skills and financial skills in order to answer to the new market demands.

There is a great need for professionals in sound engineering, programming, publishing, recording and music producing. The recently created **Department of Audiovisual Arts Technology** at Kaunas University is preparing and qualifying students in these areas. Before that there was no possibility to study the above mentioned professions in any school or universities. People who work in TV, radio and media companies were autodidacts. The market demand for these professions is huge – all students are invited to work even before they graduate. The admission requirements at university are very demanding. Only one out of six prospective students is admitted.

### **Professional music life**

Lithuania is a small country when it comes to cultural life and cultural projects. Sometimes it is a challenge to attract an audience for performances, especially in the small cities. In Vilnius, orchestras divide the week in order to get good audiences (orchestra A plays on Mondays, orchestra B plays on Tuesdays, orchestra C plays on Wednesday, and so on). Otherwise there would be too many orchestras playing at the same time in such a small city. What remained from the state-driven system is the available public funding to the 'classical' music sector. There are almost 350 orchestral musicians in Vilnius paid directly by the state (1 opera orchestra, 2 symphony orchestras and 3 chamber orchestras); the National Philharmonic Society is the only Baltic music institution keeping the old Soviet structure (it holds 2 orchestras, 2 resident singers (like in opera houses) and 3 chamber music

ensembles), which prevented musicians from looking for employment in foreign countries after the independence.

Lithuania is well known for its high quality choirs, choir conductors and vocal music. There are very strong choir traditions in the country represented in many professional, semi-professional and amateur choirs. Bringing out new Lithuanian contemporary music and different musical genres is a new tendency in choir activities. In Soviet times there were many state-run amateur choirs – in every factory, school or community. Today, there is still a large amount of amateur choirs for all age groups. The active vocal culture also helps choirs to generate audiences for their performances. One of the reasons for this positive situation is the fact that people have more economical means and time to look for a higher quality of life and choirs functions as excellent social and cultural platforms.

The Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre has started a project called “**Clinica musicalis**” in co-operation with the Santariskiu klinikos (Vilnius University Hospital). Mstislav Rostropovitch is the patron of the project. The basic idea of this «zero-budget» project is to connect new performers with new audiences. Renowned artists are invited to play without being paid, which results in top quality concerts and at the same time gives out the message to young performers that music is not only about making money. High quality performance plays an important role in the live-happening it is important that the performance’s quality is of a rather high level.

With this project the initiators intent to cultivate new audiences (78% of the hospital patients, especially those coming from the countryside, have never been to a concert before), to influence the patients’ rehabilitation positively and of course to add to the well-being of the hospital patients and at the same time to the hospital community. «Everybody thinks of a hospital as a factory, no one is expecting to be treated as a human being and to get concerts...»

This pilot project could be further developed and expanded to other state hospitals, creating a new professional opportunity for musicians. Actually, our visit was covered by the media through a substantial newspaper article and, by coincidence or not, the next day the academy was contacted by another hospital interested in the project. Private sponsoring seems to be possible but, once again, there are so many primary needs to be covered that money for ‘Clinica Musicalis’ is not available... yet.

### **A new way of thinking**

Small cultural organisations and individual artists have to find for new ways to finance their activities. Some examples of innovative cultural activities could be witnessed in Lithuania:

- Mozart concerts in Shopping Centres with the idea that business people enjoy music as a dessert after lunch
- Concerts at new places (for example at the airport and swimming pools)
- Projects in co-operation with tourist offices in different formats (middle age music in monastery with costumes)
- Cultural happenings in parks and botanic gardens moving from city to city as a cross-arts act (music, cultural heritage and sculptures)
- Arrangements of special programmes for artists who perform in festivals to encourage them to stay a few more days in the country.
- Creation of an interactive internet game by realising an animated film of Mozart’s “Magic Flute” composed of children’s animated pictures, and publication of a book containing illustrations of the opera scenes by the same children including handwritten notes and the libretto.

### **Some final personal observations and conclusions**

Musical Lithuania is still living under the shadow of Soviet structures and thinking.

- It is not possible to speak with anyone about music without speaking about money and funding.
- It is not possible to have 350 orchestra musicians in a 300,000 people city, paid by the state, in a free market economy.
- It is not possible to endorse more money to culture and music, where people's basic needs (health, education, housing) are not accomplished yet.
- It is not possible to maintain concert hall's attendance traditions when the ticket prices are not affordable for most of the population.
- It is not possible to modernize when most of the musical agents in charge (producers, directors, musicians, and professors) are of the 'old school'.

On the other hand:

- There is a strong music education tradition (built in the last 50 years by the Soviets), where everybody learned music.
- There are many music facilities, though old-fashioned, but in any case they exist (schools, theatres, instruments, faculties).
- The new generation is willing to change things.

What's happening in Lithuania is more than a generation gap or conflict, it's an ideology conflict: although a modern free market economy is established, the culture politics are not coherent with the economy. The state is still too present, imposing old-fashioned politics and rules, mostly without the appropriate funding. Private funding projects are not very common yet.

In Lithuania, the promotion of young artists is rather challenging. Organisers of cultural events prefer to work with well-known musicians as this seems to be financially safer. Young musically talented people should have a more positive image about future. At the moment, music as a profession does not seem to be interesting because of low income and the low status of musicians in society.

To be creative is a question about attitude, to be open minded and doing things differently. The co-operation with politicians is more and more important when creating possibilities to organize cultural activities. The most important way of promoting music and new ideas seems to be one-to-one contacts with influential persons. Therefore, today's musicians need networking, marketing and media skills. There is also a growing need for co-operation between different art forms.